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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 001005

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SE NATSIOS AND AF/SPG, NSC
FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/24/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREF PHUM KPKO SU AU

SUBJECT: REGIME HARDLINER TO CDA: THERE IS A GOLDEN
OPPORTUNITY FOR PROGRESS IN DARFUR.

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In a June 24 meeting with CDA Fernandez, regime hardliner Magzoub al Khalifa declared that a "golden opportunity" exists for progress on Darfur. Expressing his eagerness to work with the U.S., Khalifa stated that the next six months will be crucial for building a platform conducive to implementing the DPA. He urged both the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the USG to tone down the confrontational rhetoric communicated to the media. CDA Fernandez stated that it is in Sudan's best interest to quickly and fully accept and support a hybrid African Union-United Nations peacekeeping force. He added that Sudan should actively seek public opportunities to show that it is not obstructionist. CDA Fernandez underscored that the GoS should facilitate the work of humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Darfur and the rest of Sudan. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Presidential advisor and Darfur point-man Khalifa first expressed his hope for better cooperation with the USG, stating that there are common social and cultural issues that both governments care about. He then said that Sudan has agreed to the UN presence in Sudan saying "If Sudan had said no, that would have meant no. But that is not the case." He explained that Sudan does not hold any historical grievances against the United States, stating that unlike England, the U.S. does not carry the burden of a colonial legacy.

¶3. (C) Khalifa then stated that "there is inaccurate, improper, and incomplete information about Darfur," arguing that UN statistics have shown a recent improvement in the the health and welfare of the people of Darfur. Khalifa then entered into a pedantic discussion of the use of the term genocide, stating that the UN has not applied the term to Darfur. He argued that internal domestic politics in the U.S. have distorted the truth about Darfur. Finally, he compared Darfur to Iraq, saying that the U.N. troops in Darfur may become a target, just as the coalition forces in Iraq are targeted by opposing groups, if the political ground is not prepared and expectations are not managed.

¶4. (C) CDA Fernandez urged Khalifa to view the UN-AU hybrid force as a positive development for Sudan. With respect to the timeline for the hybrid force, Khalifa stated his expectation that it may be 2008 before the force is operational. CDA Fernandez urged Khalifa that Sudan must publicly state its immediate readiness for such a force, saying that "Time is not on your side." He urged the GoS to react positively and clearly to the upcoming UN Security Council Resolution authorizing the hybrid force. Khalifa asked that both sides try to have more constructive rhetoric on the way forward, both in Darfur and on all other bilateral issues. The CDA noted that the GoS could also show its

goodwill by being constructive in its engagement with NGOs working in Sudan. Khalifa agreed, but noted that foreign NGOs should respect Sudanese mores citing a December 2006 party in Nyala that featured alcohol, saying "We want to work with them, but they should respect our culture and dignity as a people." Khalifa also proposed strengthening bilateral relations with the U.S. and developing a joint assessment mechanism for Darfur.

15. (C) COMMENT: Khalifa is often portrayed as a government mouthpiece reluctant to engage in dialogue, but that was not the case in this particular meeting. While Khalifa's pedantic discussion of the term genocide or his comparison between Iraq and Darfur repeated common GoS rhetoric, his ability to listen, willingness to meet in the future, and portrayal of the next six months as a crucial period, constitute another side to this important GoS hardliner. We successfully communicated the message that the GoS's support for the hybrid force and humanitarian NGOs is not only part of U.S. policy, but also in Sudan's best interest. END COMMENT.

FERNANDEZ